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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR RICE MEETS WITH CANADIAN PERMREP MCNEE

Classified By: Amb. Susan Rice, for reasons 1.4 b/d.

¶1. (C) Summary. During an introductory meeting on February 18, Canadian PermRep McNee reviewed Canada's priorities with Ambassador Rice, including strengthening the UN mission in Afghanistan, ensuring UN responsiveness to peacekeeping operations' needs, and Security Council reform. He noted that Canada's tenure on the Human Rights Council (HRC) was "frustrating" and commented that Canada is not currently engaged on the upcoming Durban Conference. McNee mentioned that Canada is up for a seat on the Security Council in 2010 and noted that Canada has always had U.S. support for its candidacy. Ambassador Rice said that Canada is a reliable and effective partner, particularly in the HRC, and emphasized the importance of continued cooperation. End Summary.

AFGHANISTAN AND PEACEKEEPING

¶2. (C) Regarding Canadian efforts in Afghanistan, Ambassador McNee said that it "was dangerous, but worth it." He commented on the need for benchmarks to gauge progress and commended the Friends of Afghanistan and their desire to contribute to rebuilding the country. McNee said the UN was not as responsive as it could be, adding that it should be more forceful in Afghanistan. The UN has unique assets, he said, which could be deployed more effectively.

¶3. (C) Referencing the UK and French Security Council initiative to review peacekeeping operations, McNee emphasized the importance of troop contributing countries' (TCCs) perspectives in places like Afghanistan where more information is needed by a "broader range of characters." McNee took positive note of the Obama Administration's emphasis on peacekeeping at the UN. He remarked that UN peacekeeping is not currently in a crisis, but will soon "reach its limits." He proposed that the Security Council establish a broader group to consider peacekeeping issues, emphasizing the need to include developing nations and troop contributing countries in order to involve those who are on the ground. Ambassador Rice thanked Canada for its leadership in Afghanistan and stressed the need to close the gap between the increasing demands placed on peacekeeping operations and the capacity to respond.

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

¶4. (C) McNee said Canada will soon end its term on the HRC and added that its tenure was "frustrating." Actions within the HRC were slow-moving and fraught with structural limitations, he commented. McNee remarked that the Europeans' abstention or bloc voting was not helpful and often isolated Canada. He said the United States could be a positive influence on the HRC, referencing shared national interests. Ambassador Rice said that the U.S. appreciated Canada's role on the HRC and was reviewing its policy regarding participation in the Council.

UN REFORM

¶5. (C) McNee said Security Council reform is important but the issue is divisive. He said he is not persuaded that adding more permanent seats is the best way forward, as such a move could fracture the General Assembly. On broader UN reform, McNee said Canada supports greater spending within the UN in order to make it a more efficient organization. Other large contributors like Japan do not agree, he added. McNee maintained that countries "have to invest" to improve the quality of the UN.

DURBAN CONFERENCE

¶6. (C) Ambassador Rice told McNee that the U.S. was planning to assess the situation at the upcoming Durban Conference and gauge to what extent the U.S. can influence the discussion. McNee told Ambassador Rice that Canada was not presently engaged on the Conference but commended the new Administration for making an effort to put the conference on the right track.

Rice